

TELECOMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM

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Abstract

Structured data traffic is transmitted from a first to a second narrow band network via first and second ATM networks having respective first and second adaptation layers, e.g. AAL1 and AAL2. The traffic is segmented on egress from the first ATM network encapsulated for transport across the second ATM network so as to preserve the structure information of the data traffic. The narrow band networks may be time division multiplex networks.

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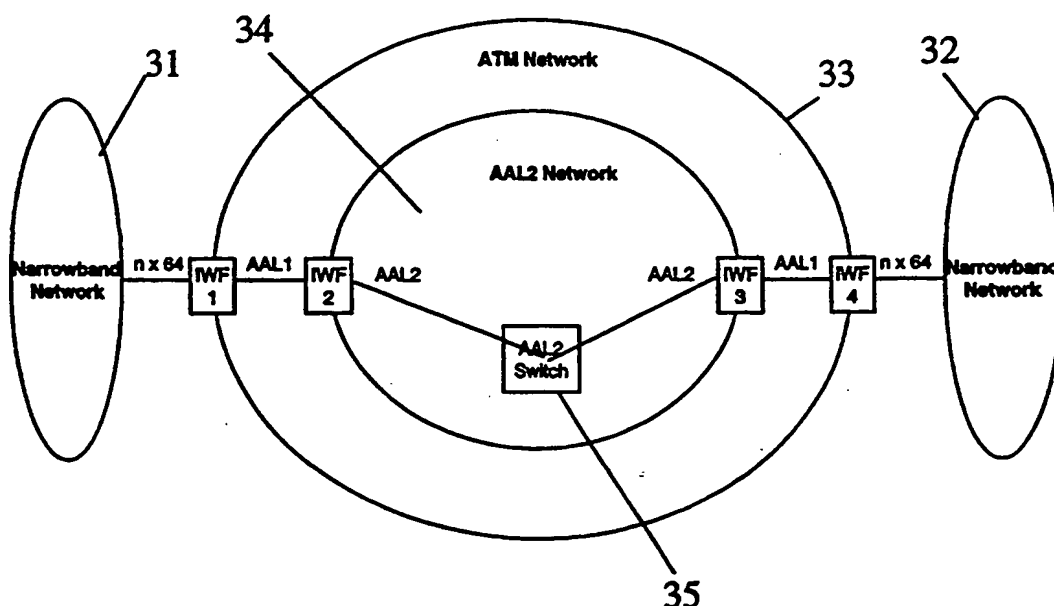
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(57) Abstract

Structured data traffic is transmitted from a first to a second narrow band network via first and second ATM networks having respective first and second adaptation layers, e.g. AAL1 and AAL2. The traffic is segmented on egress from the first ATM network encapsulated for transport across the second ATM network so as to preserve the structure information of the data traffic. The narrow band networks may be time division multiplex networks.

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TELECOMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM

This invention relates to a system and method for the transport of voice or data traffic over a telecommunications network.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

5 A recent innovation in telecommunications technology has been the introduction of the asynchronous transfer mode (ATM) transmission protocol. In this technique, information to be transmitted is loaded into packets or cells each of which is provided with a header containing information that is used for routing the cell to its correct destination. The
10 header packet or cell may also contain other protocol control information relating to the cell payload and, in particular may include a cell sequence number so that cells received at a destination, possibly via different routes, may be unpacked in the correct order to recover the payload contents. The sequence number can also be used to indicate missing cells.

15

As the technique has developed, ATM networks have evolved to handle different types of traffic, for example narrow band voice, wide band video and low bit-rate multi-user. Each particular network traffic type is adapted to its traffic content in an ATM network by the use of an ATM adaptation
20 layer (AAL) a number of which have been defined. For example, ATM adaptation layer type 1 (AAL-1) enables the transfer of $n \times 64$ kbit/s structured data between source and destination whilst preserving the structure information, ATM adaptation layer type 2 (AAL-2) provides the

ability to encapsulate, multiplex and transport packets of user information inside an ATM cell stream, and so on.

5 With increasing volumes and variety of traffic, there is now a need for interworking between services supported by different adaptation layers. In particular, there is a need to transmit traffic across ATM networks of different types.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

10 It is an object of the invention to provide an arrangement and method for transmitting traffic from one ATM network to another ATM network of a different type.

15 It is a further object of the invention to provide an arrangement and method for transmitting traffic between narrow band networks via first and second ATM networks.

20 According to the invention there is provided a method of transmitting structured data traffic from a first asynchronous network to a second asynchronous network, the first and second networks having respective first and second adaptation layers, the method including segmenting the traffic on egress from the first network, and encapsulating the segmented traffic on ingress to the second network whereby to preserve the structure information of said data traffic.

25

According to another aspect of the invention there is provided an arrangement for transmitting structured data traffic from a first asynchronous network to a second asynchronous network, the first and second networks having respective first and second adaptation layers, the
30 arrangement including means for segmenting the traffic on egress from the first network, and means for encapsulating the segmented traffic on ingress

to the second network whereby to preserve the structure information of said data traffic.

According to a further aspect of the invention there is provided a method of
5 transmitting structured data traffic from a first narrow band network to a
second narrow band network via an ATM network configuration comprising
a first ATM network embedded within a second ATM network, the method
including adapting the structured data traffic into a first format on ingress to
the first ATM network and transporting the adapted data across that
10 network, converting the adapted data into a second format for transport and
switching via the second ATM network, reconverting the adapted data from
the second format to the first format, transporting the adapted data to the
second narrow band network via the first ATM network, and converting the
formatted data back to structured data on egress from the first ATM
15 network.

The structured data can incorporate voice signals which have been digitised and which are in e.g. a TDM format.

20 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Embodiments of the invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:-

25 Figure 1 is a schematic diagram illustrating the structure of the ATM adaptation layer 1 (AAL-1);

Figure 2 is a schematic diagram illustrating the structure of the ATM adaptation layer 2 (AAL-2);

Figure 3 shows an arrangement according to an embodiment of the invention for providing interworking between AAL1 and AAL2 networks;

5 Figure 4 illustrates a first method of mapping AAL1 to AAL2 in the network arrangement of figure 3; and

Figure 5 illustrates a second method of mapping AAL1 to AAL2 in the network arrangement of figure 3.

10

DESCRIPTION OF PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Referring first to figure 1 which is introduced for explanatory purposes, the ATM Adaptation Layer Type 1 (AAL1) enables the transfer of $n \times 64$ kbit/s structured data between source and destination whilst preserving the structure information. In other words, where a repetitive frame of 'n' channels is to be transported every 125 microseconds, information indicating the start of frame is also transported so that the exact frame structure may be recovered at the destination.

20

Figure 1 shows the process used by AAL1 to provide the structured data transfer (SDT) capability. Frames of $n \times 64$ kbit/s structured data arrive for transport every 125 microseconds. The example shows frames of less than 47 octets, so that consecutive octets from adjacent data structures are concatenated to form the payloads for consecutive AAL1 SAR-PDUs. For frames longer than 47 octets, the process is similar, with consecutive octets from one or two data structures being concatenated to form the payloads.

25

In figure 1, the following acronyms are employed:

30

CRC is the convergence sublayer indicator

SC is the sequence count

CRC is the cyclic redundancy check

P is the parity

Hdr is the SAR-PDU header

Ptr is the SAR-PDU pointer

5

The AAL1 SAR-PDU always starts with a 1-octet header containing the four fields shown. In addition, a SAR-PDU pointer field of 1-octet is inserted immediately after the Header by the transmitter once in every cycle of eight cells, but only when the sequence count value in the SAR-PDU header is even. The figure shows AAL1 SAR-PDUs containing the pointer field, located in AAL1 cells with sequence number values equal to 2 in this example. The presence of the pointer field is indicated by the value '1' carried by the CSI field of the SAR-PDU header. At all other times, i.e. for all odd values of sequence count and for even values of sequence count in non-Pointer cells, the CSI field is set to '0'. Note that the presence of the SAR-PDU pointer reduces the length of the SAR-PDU payload from 47 to 46 octets in those cells in which it appears.

The pointer is used at the first opportunity in a cycle of eight cells to indicate the first start of the structured block of $n \times 64$ kbit/s channels following the end of the pointer field. This enables the start of the block structure to be recovered reliably at the receiver.

Referring now to figure 2 which is also introduced for explanatory purposes, the ATM Adaptation Layer Type 2 (AAL2) provides the ability to encapsulate and transport packets of user information inside an ATM cell stream. Packets from multiple users may be multiplexed onto a single ATM connection. These user packets consist, typically, of compressed voice information and vary in size from a few octets upwards, depending on the encoding algorithm in use. AAL2 permits packets of up to 45 octets to be carried by default with optional length of 64 octets. Longer packets must be

segmented in a service specific convergence sublayer (SSCS) function prior to being handed down to the common part sublayer (CPS) of AAL2.

5 In figure 2, PH refers to the packet header, PP to the packet payload and STF to the start field.

Figure 2 shows the sequence of operations involved in the AAL2 packet transfer process used to encapsulate user packets into an ATM cell stream. As shown, user information packets of variable length are encapsulated into
10 SSCS-PDUs. For the majority of information packets carried by AAL2, which will be routine voice (or voice and data) packets, the SSCS function is essentially null. This type of packet is referred to as Type 1 in Figure 2 and involves no addition of SSCS packet header (SSCS-PH) to the Type 1 packet. The UUI (user to user information) field in the CPS packet header
15 identifies the Type 1 packets by means of one or more code point values. Other packet types (e.g. Types 2, 3 and 4) are possible in which extra protocol control information and/or error protection is a requirement. Figure 2 identifies this latter type of packet as 'non-Type 1'. The resulting extra fields appear in the SSCS-PH and the corresponding packet types are
20 again identified as such by specific code points of the CPS packet header UUI field.

Following the SSCS process, the SSCS-PDUs are then encapsulated into CPS packets by the addition of CPS packet headers. A CPS packet thus
25 consists of a CPS packet Header (CPS-PH) and a CPS packet payload (CPS-PP). The latter field has a length of from 1 to 45 (default maximum) octets. The CPS-PH of 3 octets consists of the following 4 fields:

- CID = Channel Identifier (8 bits)
- 30 • LI = Length Indicator (6 bits)

- UUI = User-to-User Information (5 bits)
- HEC = Header Error Check (5 bits).

One or more CPS packets are concatenated and a start field (STF) plus
5 possibly a padding field are added as shown to form the CPS-PDUs, which
are the fixed length 48 octet ATM cell payloads.

Figure 3 now shows an arrangement in which information being carried on
an AAL1 cell stream is converted to an AAL2 cell stream. As shown in the
10 figure, the arrangement provides for the transfer of structured data between
narrow band networks 31, 32 via concatenated 'pure' ATM (33) and AAL2-
based (34) ATM networks. Typically, the narrow band networks 31 and 32
will be time division multiplex (TDM) networks carrying voice and/ or data
traffic. Switching of traffic within the AAL2-based network is performed by
15 AAL2 switch 35. At the Interworking Function (IWF 1) between the narrow
band network and the ATM network, the $n \times 64$ kbit/s structured data is
adapted using the SDT (structured data transfer) mechanism of AAL1. The
structured data is then transported across the ATM network to the
interworking function IWF 2 located at the boundary between the ATM
20 network 33 and the AAL2 network 34. Here, the AAL1 structured data is
converted by the interworking function IWF 2 to a suitable format for
transport and switching by means of AAL2. On the other side of the AAL2
network 34, at the interworking function IWF 3, the data is converted back
for transport via AAL1 over the 'pure' ATM network 33 to the interworking
25 function IWF 4. Here, the structured data is converted back to its original
TDM (time division multiplex) format for transport within the destination
narrow band network.

There are a number of options by which the AAL1 structured data may be
30 converted for transport via AAL2. Two preferred options involving

segmentation of the AAL1 SAR-PDUs (segmentation and reassembly-protocol data units) are discussed below.

In this the first arrangement illustrated in figure 4, the stream of AAL1 SAR-PDUs is segmented in a simple manner and then encapsulated for transport by the AAL2 CPS. As shown in figure 4, the 48 octet AAL1 SAR-PDUs (segmentation and reassembly-protocol data units) are segmented as required to enable their formation into the maximum (default) size 45 octet AAL2 CPS packets. This entails concatenating 45 octets from one or two consecutive AAL1 SAR-PDUs and adding an AAL2 CPS (common part sublayer) header field of 3 octets to form the CPS packets. The figure shows the AAL1 segments being loaded into consecutive AAL2 packets; however, it will be appreciated that packets from other applications can be interposed in the AAL2 packet stream. This in no way affects the AAL1 segmentation process, since the any AAL2 packet carrying the AAL1 segments only carries segments from the same source. These segments are identified as such belonging to a given source by means of the unique value of the CID field carried in their AAL2 packet headers.

A requirement of the above segmentation process is that of identifying the start of a structured block of data within the AAL2 CPS packets. In AAL1, this identification is accomplished by the pointer field carried in every cycle of 8 cells as explained previously. However, the above segmentation process now causes the AAL1 SAR-PDU pointer to appear asynchronously to the start of the AAL2 packets carrying the AAL1 segments. Therefore, it is necessary to carry a further CPS pointer in the AAL2 CPS packet stream whose function is to locate the start of the AAL1 SAR-PDU pointer field. For this purpose, in addition to the Type 1 UUI code point(s) identifying routine voice (or voice and data) traffic, an extra unique UUI code point is used to signify routine traffic plus CPS pointer. The octet immediately following the CPS header carrying the new UUI codepoint is then used as

the CPS pointer which locates the SAR-PDU pointer within the CPS packet. The data structure can thus be recovered at the receiver by reference to the SAR-PDU pointer.

- 5 In a second embodiment, the stream of AAL1 SAR-PDUs is segmented such that the AAL1 SAR-PDU pointer is guaranteed to be synchronous with the start of the AAL2 CPS packets. This process is illustrated in Figure 5.

10 As shown in figure 5, the 48 octet AAL1 SAR-PDUs are segmented into 24 octet equal length segments. To each segment, an AAL2 CPS packet header is appended to form 27 octet long CPS packets. This segmentation process guarantees that the SAR-PDU pointer always occupies the second octet position that follows an AAL2 CPS packet header (the first octet position being occupied by the AAL1 SAR-PDU header).

15

Clearly, in the process of figure 5, the AAL1 SAR-PDU headers only appear in every second AAL2 CPS packet. However, the UUI fields in the CPS headers contain a sequence number of some modulus, e.g. 2 or 4 or 8 or 16. By ensuring that the SAR-PDU headers only appear in CPS packets
20 containing even sequence numbers (or odd sequence numbers - it only matters that the transmitter and receiver both agree on which) the SAR-PDU Pointer can always be located at the receiver. This is simply a matter of identifying the SAR-PDU Headers with a CSI field carrying the value '1'. The SAR-PDU pointer is then located in the octet immediately following the
25 header field and enables the data structure to be recovered at the receiver.

This segmentation process can be extended to segment lengths other than 24. Where the maximum AAL2 packet length is the default of 45 octets, any segment length that is a whole number divisor of 48 can be used
30 successfully, except 48 itself (48 octet segments can be used in cases where the default maximum AAL2 packet length is 64 octets). For any

segment length created by this rule, the result is that the AAL1 SAR-PDU header appears every 'N' AAL2 CPS packets, where 'N' is the integer divisor which provides the segment length. Again, providing that the SAR-PDU headers only appear in CPS packets with even sequence numbers,
5 the SAR-PDU pointer can be recovered at the receiver.

Recovery may be simplified by ensuring that, at the start of transmission, the SAR-PDU Header appears in the CPS packet with sequence number '0' (or some other known value of sequence number). This provides a ready
10 index from which counting to determine the position of the SAR-PDU pointer every 'N' packets can be carried out. However, note that the case of the 48 octet segments is special - here, the SAR-PDU header appears in every CPS packet, which makes the recovery of the SAR-PDU pointer particularly straightforward.

15 It will be understood that although the technique has been described above with particular reference to use with the AAL1 and AAL2 adaptation layers, it is of more general application. It will also be understood that various modifications and alterations might be made by those skilled in the art
20 without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention.

CLAIMS:

- 1 A method of transmitting structured data traffic from a first asynchronous network to a second asynchronous network, the first and
5 second networks having respective first and second adaptation layers, the method including segmenting the traffic on egress from the first network, and encapsulating the segmented traffic on ingress to the second network whereby to preserve the structure information of said data traffic.
- 10 2. A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein the structured data traffic is segmented into common part sublayer (CPS) packets, each said packet being provided with a header field.
3. A method as claimed in claim 2, wherein said header field comprises
15 three octets.
4. A method as claimed in claim 3, wherein the structured data incorporates pointers, and wherein the segmentation is such that a said pointer is incorporated in every second CPS packet.
20
5. A method as claimed in claim 4, wherein the structured data comprises forty eight octet protocol data units, and wherein each said protocol data unit is segmented into two twenty four octet segments.
- 25 6. A method as claimed in claim 5, wherein a said pointer occupies an octet position immediately following the header
7. An arrangement for transmitting structured data traffic from a first asynchronous network to a second asynchronous network, the first and
30 second networks having respective first and second adaptation layers, the arrangement including means for segmenting the traffic on egress from the

first network, and means for encapsulating the segmented traffic on ingress to the second network whereby to preserve the structure information of said data traffic.

5 8. A method of transmitting structured data traffic from a first narrow band network to a second narrow band network via an ATM network configuration comprising a first ATM network embedded within a second ATM network, the method including adapting the structured data traffic into
10 adapted data across that network, converting the adapted data into a second format for transport and switching via the second ATM network, reconverting the adapted data from the second format to the first format, transporting the adapted data to the second narrow band network via the first ATM network, and converting the formatted data back to structured
15 data on egress from the first ATM network.

9. A method as claimed in claim 8, wherein the structured data traffic is segmented into common part sublayer (CPS) packets, each said packet being provided with a header field.

20

10. A method as claimed in claim 9, wherein said header field comprises three octets.

11. A method as claimed in claim 10, wherein the structured data
25 incorporates pointers, and wherein the segmentation is such that a said pointer is incorporated in every second CPS packet.

12. A method as claimed in claim 11, wherein the structured data comprises forty eight octet protocol data units, and wherein each said
30 protocol data unit is segmented into two twenty four octet segments.

13. A method as claimed in claim 12, wherein a said pointer occupies an octet position immediately following the header.

14. A method as claimed in claim 13, wherein said first ATM network
5 comprises an AAL1 type network and said second ATM network comprises an AAL2 type network.

15. A method as claimed in claim 14, wherein said first and second narrow band networks are time division multiplex (TDM) networks.

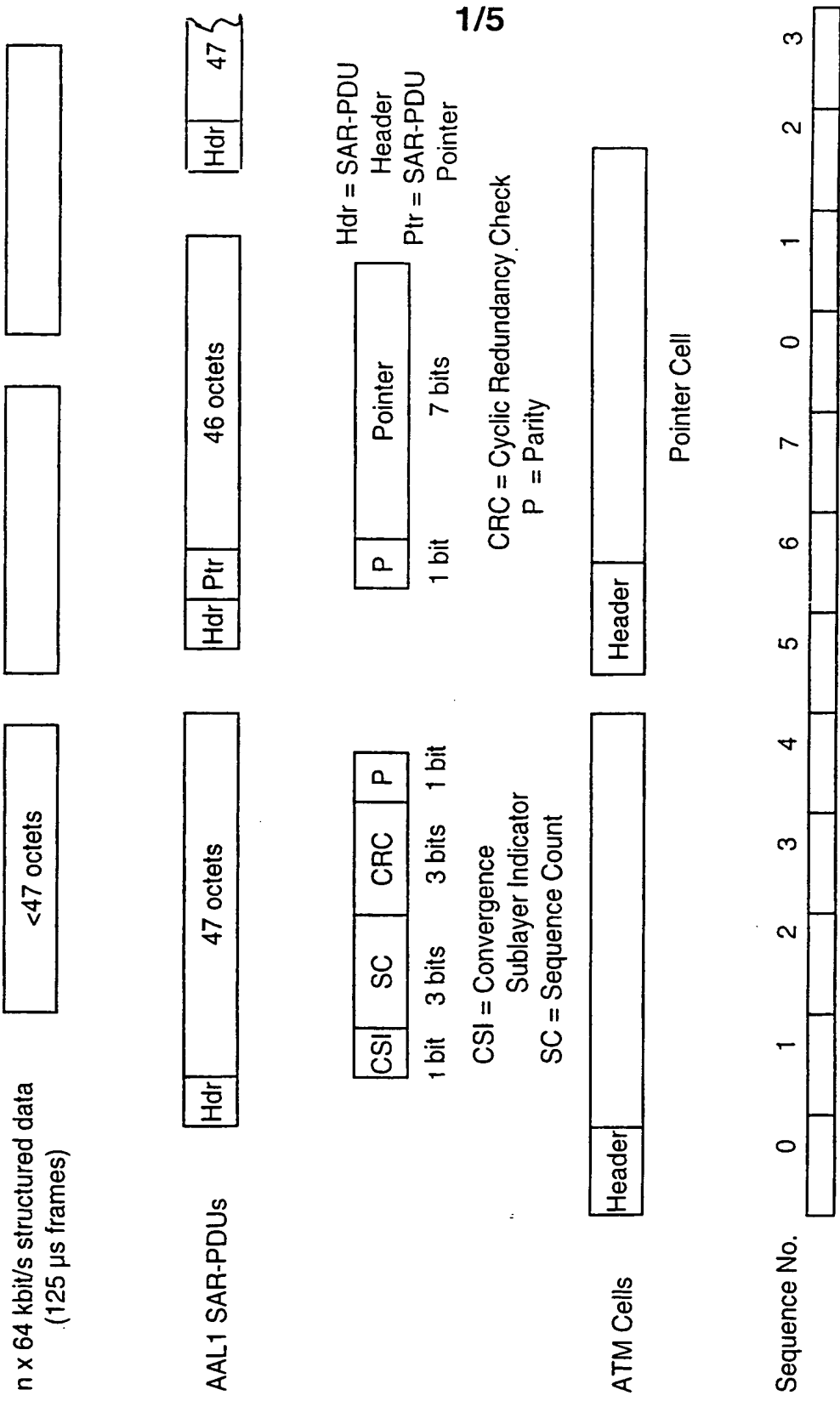


Figure 1

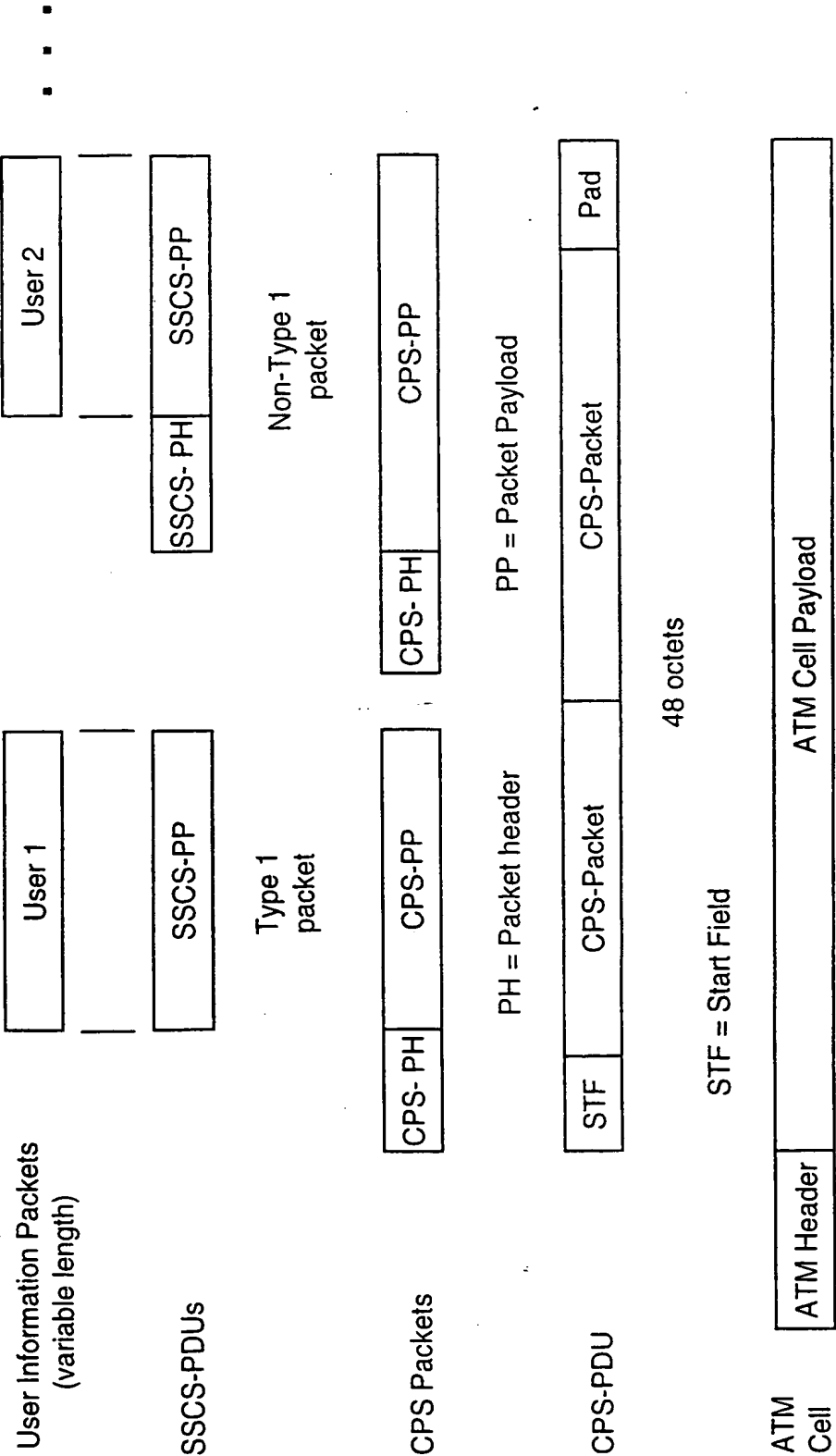


Figure 2

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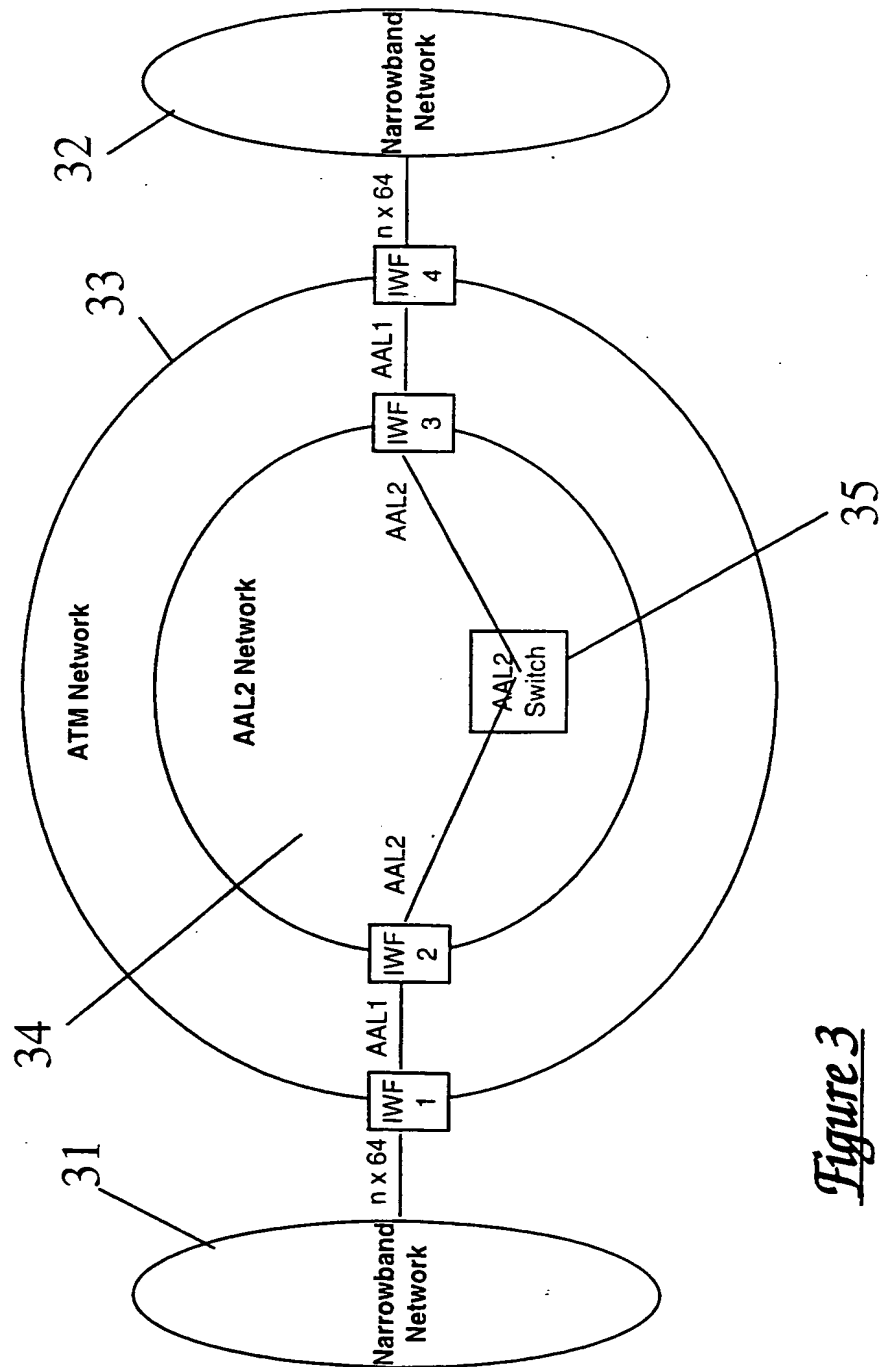


Figure 3

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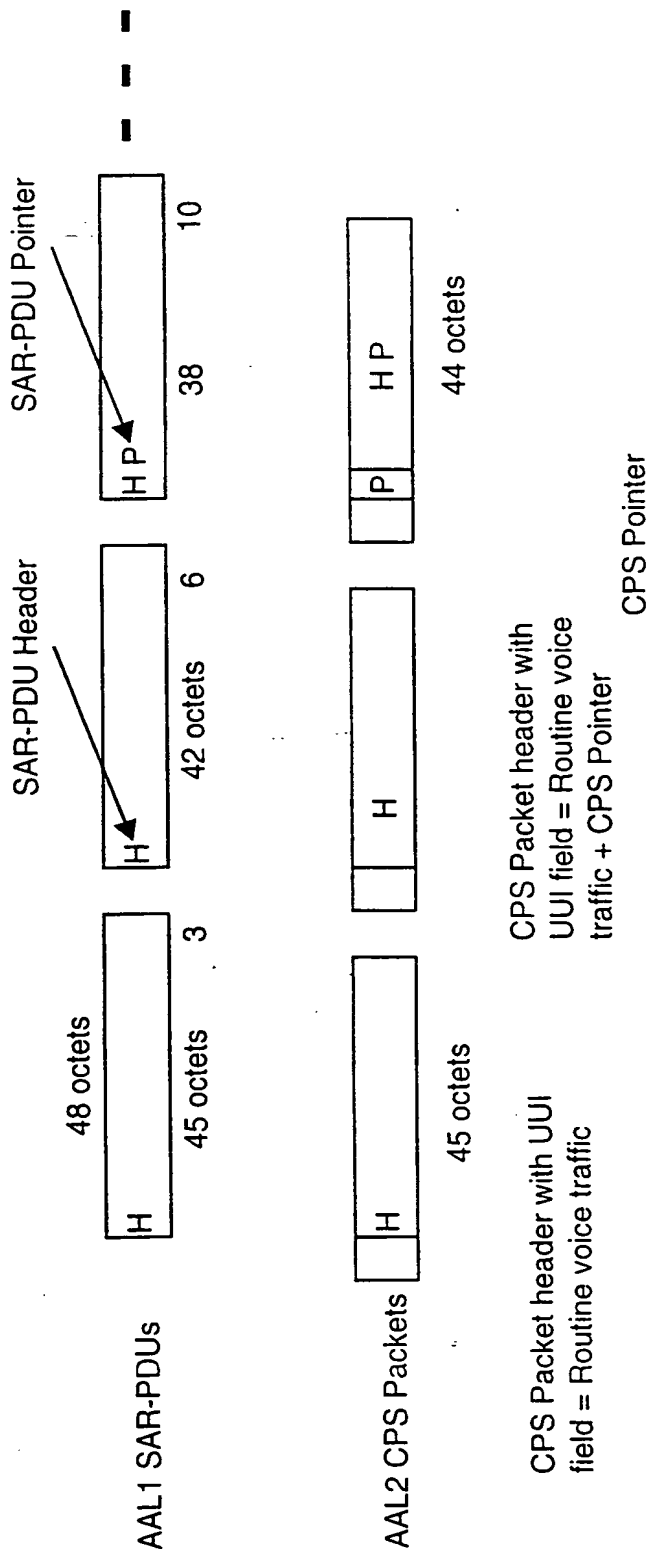


Figure 4

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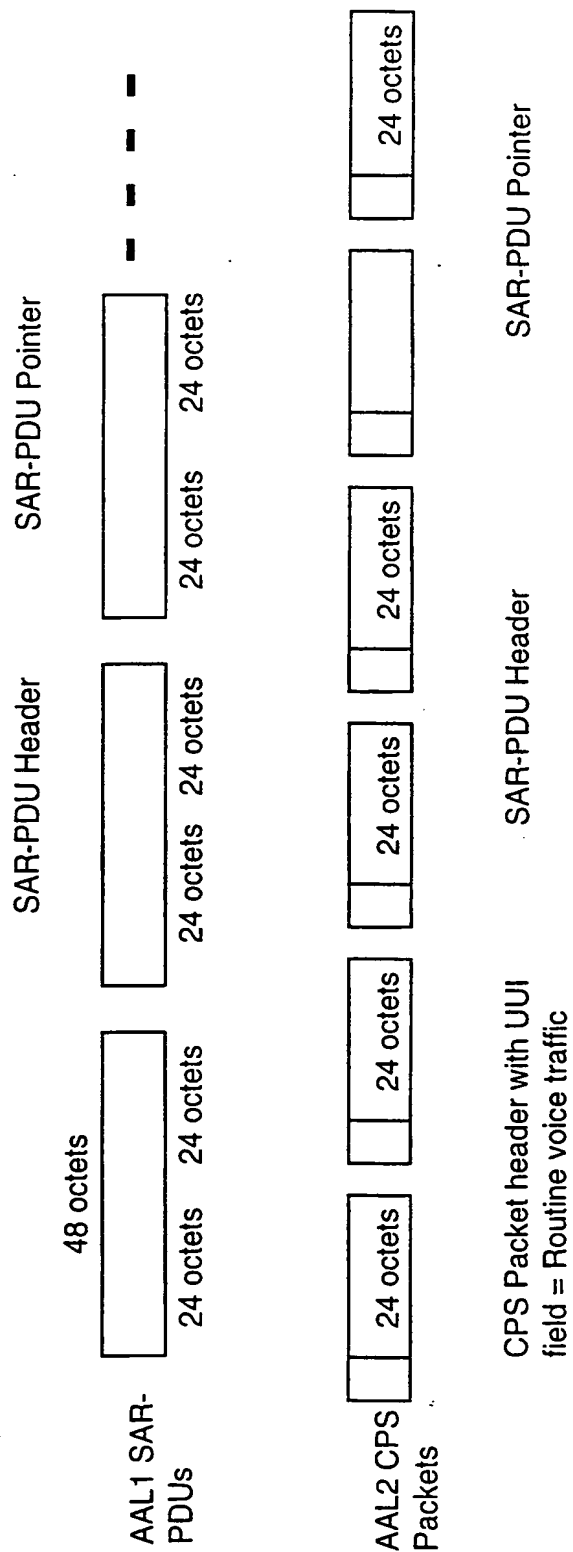


Figure 5

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

 International Application No
 PCT/GB 98/02160

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

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C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	US 5390175 A (HILLER et al.) 14 February 1995 (14.02.95), abstract, column 1, line 5 - column 5, line 15, fig. 42, claim 1.	1
A	GB 2294840 A (GPT LTD.) 08 May 1996 (08.05.96), abstract, fig. 1, claim 1.	1
A	GB 2299240 A (NORTHERN TELECOM LTD.) 25 September 1996 (25.09.96), abstract, claim 1.	1

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 Date of the actual completion of the international search
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